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Remarks at a New York Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee Reception in New York City

October 25, 2000

The President. Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years! [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm just looking forward to being a good, law-abiding taxpayer of New York. [*Laughter*] Let me say, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for inviting me here tonight and for your truly outstanding leadership. You've had a lonely post in a State with a Republican Governor and a Republican Senate. And I have watched for years, long before I could have known we'd be in the positions we're in today, where I'm out here campaigning for a Senate spouse. [*Laughter*] And I admire so much what you have done, and I was honored to be invited to come by and be with you tonight.

I thank our Democratic Chair, Judith Hope, and all the members of the assembly who are here. I feel so grateful to New York for many reasons—for the extraordinary support that you have given to me and Al Gore from 1992 on. Knowing that there would be 33 electoral votes in the can before we had to worry about the rest has been an enormous sense of psychological support for us these past 8 years.

I thank you for the uncommon kindness and generosity that so many of you have shown to my wife in this very long campaign, about a 16-month campaign she's waged now. And I think it will be successful, in no small measure because people like you have helped her. And I'm very grateful to you for that.

I, also, as a lifelong baseball nut, I thank you for giving us the best World Series in 50 years.

I want to say just two things seriously, if I might. First of all, as I think all of you know, I was a Governor for a dozen years before I ran for President, and I think I understand the connection between the Federal and State Government about as well as anybody. I understand that no matter what we do in Washington and how well we do it, the impact that our policies have on real people depends in part on how aggressively a State does its job.

New York, for example, because you had a program to insure children previously, has been one of the most successful States in enrolling children in our Children's Health Insurance Program. And I know a lot of you have been very active in that. I'll give you—the polar opposite case is the legislature in Arizona got a bill passed through the legislature which literally prohibited the schools of Arizona from enrolling children in the program in school. So not surprisingly, they're not doing very well.

But that illustrates the point. The flip side is that no matter how well you try to do your job, if you have a lousy economy, it will be harder for you. There won't be as many taxpayers, and there will be a lot more drain on the State treasury. And if we make bad decisions in terms of how these funds are allocated, it will be tough for you.

And I tried to be very, very sensitive to that for the last 8 years. And I can give you one example of that now, that our friend Congressman Engel, who also previously served in the New York Assembly, and he's here with us tonight, is helping me on.

In 1997, when we passed the Balanced Budget Act, because the Democrats had taken all the tough decisions in '93 alone, without any help from the other party—when the Vice President cast the tie-breaking vote and began to turn this country around, something I believe he'll be rewarded for 2 weeks from yesterday—we knew we had to slow the rate of growth of health care expenditures. And we agreed to take the estimates of the Congressional Budget Office, just like your legislative budget operation here, about what changes would be necessary to achieve a certain level of savings.

Now, we thought at the time that they had overestimated what had to be done. But we all agreed to play by the same rules. We did it in good faith, and we had a remarkable moment of bipartisan harmony. Now there is 100 percent agreement that the changes that we instituted in 1997 were too draconian and that the Medicare programs are not properly funded. And there is a bipartisan agreement to put $28 billion back into Medicare. But we're having a huge fight down there about how to allocate it. And our friends in the Republican caucus basically asked the Democrats in Congress and

the representatives of the White House to leave, and they cut the money up and gave a third of the money to the HMO's, without any guarantees, I might add. The argument was that all over America, especially in a lot of small towns in rural America, HMO's were dropping their Medicare recipients. That's true. But they put the money in without any guarantee that they'll take them back and keep them once they take them back.

So it has the feeling of a political decision that won't have a good policy impact. And it has the consequence of depriving urban hospitals, teaching hospitals, nursing homes, home health care agencies, hospice operations, and a few other smaller health care providers of the funds they need to serve people on Medicare.

So we're in—one of the last-minute struggles we're in as we try to finish this congressional session, already about a month late this week, is trying to get a fair share for New York of these health care funds, but not just for New York, for everybody in the country that's in the same situation you're in.

But it will have a lot to do with how well you can do your job in the coming year whether we make the right decision or not in the next 48 hours. So I come here basically as a Governor and as a President who has 8 years of experience understanding that if you do your job well, the policies I've fought for will be validated. If you don't, the impact of the policies will be severely limited. And I know that if we don't do the right things in Washington, we're making your load an awful lot heavier. So that's why I'm honored to be here.

Now let me just say three things that I promised myself I would say to every group I saw between now and the election. And they're the same things I would say if I were sitting alone in a room with any of you and you asked me why we should be supporting Al Gore, Joe Lieberman, Hillary, Eliot, all the Democrats. There are three great questions that the voters will resolve in this election, whether consciously or unconsciously. Whether they vote or stay home, there will be three great questions resolved.

One is, are we going to keep this prosperity going and extend it to the people who aren't a part of it yet? We say the first thing we've got to do is keep paying this debt down, because the decision we made to get rid of the deficits in '93 led to an immediate drop in interest rates, a big increase in the stock market, and people saved huge money on business loans and everything else that requires credit. And we have to keep doing that.

We set aside the money to do that and then say, with the money that's left we'll have a tax cut we can afford, that will focus on the needs of working families, to educate their children, send them to college, for child care, for long-term care for the elderly and the disabled, for retirement savings, but we'll have one we can afford and still have the money we need to invest in education, health care, the environment, national security, and our future.

Now, that's very important, because our friends on the other side say that we can afford a trillion and a half dollar tax cut, a trillion dollar Social Security privatization program, and $500 billion worth of spending. There is no way you can cram $3 trillion into a $2 trillion projected surplus—which won't be that big; ask Eliot; there's no way it's going to be that big, not after this session of Congress—without going into deficit.

If you go into deficit, it means higher interest rates. The Gore-Lieberman plan will keep interest rates about a percent lower for a decade. That's worth $390 billion in lower home mortgage payments, $30 billion in lower car payments, $15 billion in lower college loan payments, lower credit card payments, lower business loans, means more businesses, more jobs, and a higher stock market. This is not rocket science. This is elementary mathematics. You need to drive this home to everybody you talk to. It's an issue in the President's race. It's an issue in the Senate race. It's an issue in the races for Congress, and it will dramatically affect what you do in the State Assembly for the next 4 years.

The second issue is, are we going to build on the progress we've made in bringing our society together or reverse policy? Now, look, in the last 8 years the welfare rolls have been cut in half; there is a 26-year low in crime; the environment is cleaner; the air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; the drinking water is safer; we've cleaned up 3 times as many toxic waste dumps. And we've proved you can do it and grow the economy. We've got a decline in the number of people who don't have health insurance, for the first time in a dozen years—again, thanks a lot to people like you who have made sure we enroll these children in the Children's

Health Insurance Program. And the schools are getting better: The drop-out rate is lower; the college-going rate is at an all-time high; the reading and math scores are up. We know now how to turn around these failing schools.

So we have to decide, are we going to build on this prosperity, this progress? That's what Gore and Lieberman and Hillary and all the people running for Congress have advocated. They'll give you more tools to help make the schools better, to help improve the health care system and provide insurance to people who don't have it, to provide a Medicare drug program, to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights. They'll continue to make the environment cleaner. They'll continue to drive the crime rate down by putting more police on the street.

In every single one of these areas they're running against people who, in good conscience I think, want to reverse all these policies. Now, it's not like you haven't had a test run here. You need to talk to people about that. We tried it our way. We tried it their way. Our way works better. [*Laughter*] It works. The evidence is in.

And the third great question is whether we're going to continue to build one America as we grow more diverse. Shelley mentioned the work that we've done in the Middle East and are doing. And that takes about half of every day I have now and most of the night. We are, as ever, committed to the security of the State of Israel and committed to the proposition that if it can be done honorably, the long-term security of Israel is best served by a just peace. It is very tough over there now, and I'm doing what I can.

Some of you mentioned the work we've done in Ireland. I thank you for that. New York also has a lot of people from the Balkans who have commented to me in the last few weeks how grateful they are that Mr. Milosevic is gone and that we ended ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo.

But the point I want to make for tonight is that in order for the United States to continue to do good around the world, we have to be good at home. We have to be an example of a genuine, tolerant, open society. And the Democrats, therefore, are for the hate crimes bill. They're for the employment nondiscrimination bill. They're for immigration fairness legislation that we're fighting like crazy for in the closing days of this legislative session. They're for continuing our national service program. They're for equal pay for women. They're for a woman's right to choose and appointments to the judiciary that will generally reflect the ability of legislative bodies, including the Congress to protect the rights and the interests of the American people. Now, that is a very important—[*inaudible*].

And this election will determine, therefore, whether we keep the prosperity going and extend it to people who aren't part of it yet, whether we keep the social progress going and build on it, and whether we continue to build one America. Those are the three great questions. And I just hope that every day you can, between now and election, you will share those three points with as many people as you can, because this is a great time. I've done as—I've worked as hard as I could to turn the country around, to move it forward, to pull it together. But when Al Gore says to you that the best is yet to come and you ain't seen nothing yet, when a person running for office says that, it may sound like a campaign statement. But I'm not running for anything for the first time in 26 years—[*laughter*]—and I believe that.

It takes a long time to turn a country around. All the best things are still out there. All the best things are still out there. That's what he and Joe Lieberman have been talking about. That's what Hillary has tried to talk about in this election. And we may never have another chance in our lifetime to have a moment like this, that we can mold for our children and our grandchildren.

So I think you should all be happy; you should be confident; you should be proud to be members of the Democratic Party. And you ought to go out there and bear down, every day between now and election, and turn as many voters as you can here and in New Jersey and in any other place in America where you know people that would be more likely to help us if they knew those simple three things. And remember, not voting is almost as bad as voting against us.

So turn them out, and we'll have a great celebration in 2 weeks.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. at the Four Seasons Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Sheldon (Shelley) Silver, speaker, New York State Assembly; Gov. George E. Pataki of New

York; Judith Hope, chair, New York State Democratic Party; and former President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Statement on National Disability Mentoring Day
October 25, 2000

Today, on National Disability Mentoring Day, I commend the members of my administration and the public and private organizations across the Nation that are conducting mentoring activities to help expand employment opportunities for young people with disabilities. I also applaud the young people participating in Mentoring Day and extend my special congratulations to the winners of the Disability Mentoring Day Essay Contest. Each participant has helped advance the goal of today's effort to expose young people with disabilities to a variety of career options, while acquainting employers with the contributions that this future talent pool can make.

I am pleased to report that my administration is taking specific actions to help more people with disabilities participate in the workforce. These steps include new public-private partnerships to close the digital divide for people with disabilities and a variety of grants to advance the goals of the landmark Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act I signed last year.

I am also glad to report important progress in both Federal and private sector initiatives to hire more people with disabilities. First, the Federal Government is on track to meet the goal I announced on the 10th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act to hire 100,000 more persons with disabilities over 5 years. Second, CEO's of a dozen major companies are leading the way by pledging to support the recruitment, hiring, and promotion of individuals with disabilities.

Together, these important steps represent a powerful statement about what we can accomplish when Federal, State, and private sector partners work together toward the full inclusion of people with disabilities in our Nation's historic economic growth and prosperity. Hiring people with disabilities is not just the right thing to do. It's good for business; it's good for communities; and it's good for all Americans.

Statement on Proposed Latino and Immigrant Fairness Legislation
October 25, 2000

It is long past time that we correct several injustices and provide fairness in our immigration system by enacting the "Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act." This legislation is a straightforward proposal to keep families together and to make our immigration policies more equitable. This legislation would help individuals and their families who have been living for many years in the United States and have developed strong ties to their communities to adjust their immigration status. My administration has been trying to negotiate with Republicans, but unfortunately, current Republican proposals would not help most of the immigrants that would get relief under the "Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act," and would perpetuate the current patchwork of contradictory and unfair immigration policies. These injustices should be corrected by Congress before they adjourn this year. If these issues are not resolved, I will veto the Commerce, Justice, State appropriations.